

Taking care

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Summary: One early winternight with the shinsengumi changes Chizurus life forever. AU, storyline takes place in some alternate storytime without so much... deaths. Edited and final chapters up!

## 1. Chapter 1

Disclaimer: I do not own Hakuouki Shinsengumi Kitan, if I did things would have gone differently...

**\*\*Taking care\*\***

The first snow of the season was sailing in silent flakes through the dark night sky. Soon winter would come and the already cold days would turn to really freezing nights.

Chizuru had finished washing the dishes and taking care of the kitchen after supper and was making her way back to her rooms on the veranda, when she stopped, admiring the view. The always busy household was quite because the loud soldiers of the Shinsengumi had all retired to their quarters for the night. The garden laid in hazy shadows, only the snow flakes dancing through the air like the Sakura blossoms in spring. It was freezing and not long after the girl started her reflection, she turned back to continue on her way to bed.

“It's cold,” Chizuru whispered into the dark and tried to warm her hands with her breath. “Winter is approaching fast this year.”

She was passing the rooms of the captains of the warrior squad, when suddenly she heard a faint noise. The brunet stopped in her tracks. There it was again, a faint mumbling or more like a winning. A dreadful feeling run through the young woman. She knew that sound and she didn't like it one bit. Careful not to disturb the night more than necessary, the girl started to creep along the wall of the building, listening into each room, to see if she could find the

source of the painful whimpers.

Quite snoring came from the first and no sound at all from the second door she listened at. When she reached the third, the rustle of clothes and the scraping of nails on wood told her she was on the right track. She opened the door and made her way to the prone figure on the futon. Long, white hair spilled over the bedding, the face turned down, the naked back of Chizurus personal monster for this night, heaving with rustling and unsteady breathing.

“Shhhhhh,” she tried her best to be as non threatening as possible. “It's all right. Everything will be over soon.”

Chizuru knelled on the side of the man and tried to touch him reassuringly. In that moment wild, red eyes fixed her with a predatory look from under the white strands. No reason was left in them, as they looked the girl up and a painful grin spread on the contorted face of her friend.

Because all the members of the Shinsengumi were her friends, no matter the circumstances. But the man before her was lost to his own demons, to a blood lust so deep, she was not sure she could bring him back.

Chizuru shivered. Horror crawling up her spine, faith and courage leaving her by the second. The cruel faces of the blood lusting monsters that attacked her on the first night she was in this town, the ones that had brought her to the tutelage of her wonderful companions, reflected in her inner eye and paralysed her with fear.

Growling bought her back from her nightmare of over two years ago and into the one before her now.

“It will be ok...” her voice trembled too much to be reassuring now. “I'm here for you.” She tried again, her hand outstretched to the lost soul in front of her.

And he reacted at once. Not the way she was expecting, not the way the possessed by the water of life normally attack. He grabbed her forcefully, pulled her close searching for an opening in her kimono. But when he had found it, he did not attack the obvious presented neck. His hands went deeper, trying to reach the rest of her flesh.

Bewildered Chizuru tried to struggle. “What...? Please no...” the girl offered her attacker her neck. “Here,” she breathed. “Take my blood and you will feel better.”

She had never been so scared of one of her companions. None had ever been so gone, so crazed that they would not react to her, that they would not take her offering and turn back to their normal selves. They always regretted hurting her afterwards, but she offered willingly. Her friends, her family was precious enough to her, to make such a sacrifice.

This time it was dangerous. Nothing seemed to be left of the man she so much cared for.

His hands had loosened her clothing and his body was accosting her in

a way completely foreign.

“Why?... Please stop...”

Chizurus pleas went unheard in the deep of the night, growling overlapping them and her sobs drowning them out.

Half an eternity seemed to have passed before the creature above her sank his teeth into her neck. Mouths-full of her blood went down his throat and then, the white of his hair started fading back into black and the red of his eyes turned slowly into their normal deep colour. Still he seemed not to be conscious.

The girl had stopped pleading, had stopped sobbing all together a while back. She stared at the man in her arms who had done unspeakable things to her and finally could recognize her beloved captain again. If she was lucky, he would not remember this night.

He fell to the side and Chizuru did her best to wrap him up in the blankets lying around the futon.

The young woman, because now she would never be a girl again, made sure the warrior would not get cold that night. She left the rooms to at least find some peace and solace in her own empty and cold bed.

The next day stared out like any other.

The brunet housekeeper of the Shinsengumi rose before sunrise, went into the kitchen and did the wonders she always did to create a suitable breakfast for the men.

The first meal went by, the morning training was done with, in which the girl decided that she would apply herself much more from now on, patrol duty and lunch went on and even dinner passed like any other day.

If it wasn't for Hijikata stopping behind her that afternoon and murmuring a very shy “thank you” to her, Chizuru would have sworn that nothing special had happened there the night before. She could not be sure how much the demon commander of the troupe knew about the events that took place, but if she had to judge by the trembling of his voice, she was sure he knew more than what she wanted this brave man to know.

Ok, so some dictionary work before any language questions start:

Shinsengumi: group of not upper-class samurai who established themselves as such in the revolutionary period around ~1860 in Japan, protecting the city and working for the shogunate.

In the anime they are all bishonen (very yummi ^^) and have "adopted" a female member (Chizuru) into their group.

Shogun/Shogunate: General, rule of the general

Ronin: wandering samurai/warrior.

Water of Life/ ochimizu: the blood of Oni (demons) used in the anime by the members of the troupe to be able to heal their wounds faster. It has some ugly side effects: red eyes, white hair (still very yummi ^^), craziness, blood lust, very dark turn of character, complete loss of original personality...

Rasetsu: human-demon hybrid created by the blood of life. Not the best of companions... see above.

Sakura: Japanese cherry

Hakama: traditional japanese, wide trousers, made basically for horse back riding, worn by men.

Kimono: traditional japanese dress, normally worn by females

Geisha: traditionally a woman for polite and interesting company. They excel at arts, know about politics and social rituals.

Kamis: pl. of kami, japanese for god.

Katana: japanese sword.

Soji doors: sliding doors made out of rice paper.

Hime: japanese princess.

Shogi: japanese chess.

Go: japanese strategy game

Dojo: japanese training hall

Futon: traditional japanese bed, extended on the floor for the night and rolled up at day time.

## 2. Chapter 2

Winters blankets fell over the city, life got slower, the fightings fewer and the trainings harder because of the cold surrounding the land. The Shinsengumi did their duty without complain, saving the city from rough ronin and marauders, helping where they could and even stopping the fires that had started on one of the town quarters by accident.

All in all, winter was a quite affair.

The snow was still high when Kondo-sama send out a delegation to Osaka. The mission was secret, delicate and somewhat dangerous. Chizuru trembled as she saw her friends of, eyes full of tears, and her best wishes for them on her lips.

Okita made fun of her, for worrying to much. Saito on the other hand knocked the insolent captain over the head. Everyone started laughing, so the goodbyes turned out way more happy than depressing.

Even Hijikata seemed satisfied, if his murmured "you reap what you sow, Okita" and the slight smile on his lips were any

indication.

The small group passed the gates and the second in command of the troupe looked back one last time before they all vanished in the brilliant white of the morning sun.

The weeks passed in the city and the rest of the warrior troupe did their assigned duty without flaw. Chizuru had changed her own schedule, got up even sooner to finish her work in the housekeeping, and started to train with the younger and more inexperienced soldiers. She even dresses as a boy again.

Such change went not unnoticed and one morning Kondo-sama started to ask.

“Ne Chizuru-chan, you started training again. How come? Where you not happy the way it has been until now?”

The whole room held its breath. Chizuru had been fearing the questions about her change in behaviour and clothes. When none came at first, she was very happy to let it all rest. But the peace could never last long with this rowdy men and one way or the other, her troubles had to catch up with her.

She swallowed her bite and looking more at the floor than any of the present men, she replied.

“It's not so much a recent change, Kondo-sama. Should I return to the way things were before?”

The leader turned scarlet and started to look a bit flustered. “No, no”, he assured. “I was not complaining. But it surprised all of us, that Chizuru started wearing her hakama again, instead of the kimono. And you have never trained so hard before, even when you had to act like a boy...”

He trailed off scratching his head. Silence flooded the room.

“Last winter, with the first snow, I was reminded of the first time I came to the Shinsengumi.” The young woman replied. “I felt helpless in that moment and I swore, I would never feel such again.”

She looked up.

“You are all brave men and great warriors and I'm very grateful for your protection. But I want to be my own man. I want to be able to defend myself if need be. I think I will never be as great a swordsman as Okita-san or as strong a fighter as Shimpachi-san, but I want to be able to swing my sword and not hurt myself in the process.”

Silence greeted her words. “That is why,” she finished, “I started training again. I tried to not upset the household too much, but if you rather have me on my old duty only, I will do as you wish.”

Kondo blinked bewildered. “What?... no, no Chizuru-chan.” he reiterated again. “I was merely curious, as nobody seemed keen to ask you, I took it upon myself.” He looked around the room for

confirmation and all present stared babbling at once.

“It's no problem Chizuru-chan”

“You have been doing great, you should keep up the hard work, Chizuru.”

“I wouldn't want Chizuru-chan to feel weak.”

Before the mayhem could start, Kondo held up a hand. “Now you see, nobody is asking you to quit your training. But if you are training as hard as every one of us and doing all the same duties too, I don't see why you should be the only one in charge of the house keeping. It was nice for as long as it lasted, but now to be fair, we should start to help out again and not have one of our warriors be a housemaid on top of everything else.”

And so it was decided to split and rotate the housework, like it had been done in the very first days of the Shinsengumi.

It had been months since that fateful night which made Chizuru turn her life up side down. After the first moon had passed, the female member of the Shinsengumi had started to have a bad feeling, after the second, she began denying her own suspicions.

A few weeks had passed since their leader had inquired about her change of heart and now, it was very obvious to her, that she had not survived the attack unscratched. Soon it would not be possible to hide it from the rest of the group either.

How could she have been so careless, so naive to overlook the glaring signs. Deep in her heart Chizuru knew the answer to that question. She wanted to forget that incident, wanted to forget, that the person she treasured most of all her companions, had been so far gone to hurt her body, mind and soul. She wanted to forget, that he could possibly know what he had done to her. And she definitively did not want to acknowledge, that he may distance himself even more because of it.

On any normal circumstances, such an event would be celebrated. In her case, she feared the worst.

Chizuru did not know if she was ready to face the consequences. But she did know, that there was at least one person, she would confine in before she did anything at all. She respected him to much to deny him the right to know about his child. She could only pray, that the men sent out on a secret mission would return soon and well.

The snow had melted, the trees were green and flowers adorned the side of roads and rivers. Children laughed and played carefree in the fields and life itself had returned to the city. With the spring, the fearsome warriors of the Shinsengumi who went out to Osaka, returned home.

### 3. Chapter 3

The sun was high in the sky, the division on patrol had left at least one hour ago and Heisuke, who was on kitchen duty that day, just passed her on his way back from the market.

Chizuru was training with her blade under the watchful eyes of Saitou, repeating the movements time and again and correcting her stance, every time her teacher instructed her to. Hajime was a strict instructor, who would not teach her anything new until she perfected his precedent lesson. Sometimes it was very frustrating to the young woman, but most of the time it was only tiring like hell.

Every captain had his fighting style and his own way of teaching. They had taken it upon them, to instruct their little princess themselves. Nothing less than the best, Kondo-sama had said, for the most precious flower in their garden. Chizuru wondered how long that statement would ring true.

Shimpachi and Sanosuke were the once for strength. They made her run around the perimeter of the building countless times, carrying weight on her back and pushing that old, heavy wheel in front of her.

Heisuke was the most playful one. He loved to play catch with her, where she had to avoid him in any way possible. Running around for hours, jumping over every obstacle that lay in her way because he would not hesitate to do so himself, or climbing trees and roofs to get small advantages was extremely taxing too.

Sannan on the other hand, preferred tactics. He would teach her about different tactics used in combat and war and afterwards, he would let her solve his very tricky practical problems. One thing was sitting over books and understanding the ways of the old warriors, another all together was applying the methods and improvising on the spot. Because, as he liked to remind her, she was not the only one studying the old texts and her enemy would have known how to counter them in the first place.

Saitou was the perfectionist.

A light breeze carried over the place, cooling Chizuru down from the exercise and the burning sun. Sweat was running down her back and her cheeks had redden from the workout. Saitou stood behind her, in his black kimono, not even affected by the heat of the midday. Even for spring, it was warm.

They heard their voices before they could see the group of men coming through the portal. With the demon commander ahead of them, the travellers returned home, flocked by a group of their own soldiers whom they had encounter entering town. Okita was joking with some of them and the rest of the travellers, while Hijikata made his way directly to the main building.

“Look Hajime, they are back!” Chizuru forgot all about her training. She wanted to run up to the group and greet them warmly, but her housekeeping responsibility told her, it would be prudent to alert Heisuke first. She had sheathed her sword, when Saitou asked her unimpressed: “And where do you think you are going?”

She smiled at him brilliantly. “Don't you agree that someone should warn Heisuke.”

He would not have let her go, if she just wanted to greet the home coming, but because her practical sense had won over, Hajime closed

his eyes and let her leave training earlier. After all he did not want to hear the young warrior complain if he had to cook twice.

Chizuru run all the way to the kitchen and jumped in like the house was on fire, scaring Heisuke and nearly making him drop the freshly washed vegetables.

“Heisuke, guess what!”, the brunet exclaimed without letting the boy do so. “Hijikata and the others are back!”

Smiling at him as if someone had presented her with the most beautiful of kimonos, she run up to the startled boy and hugged him.

“Oi,oi Chizuru! I'm not the one who was out for over a month now!” The man tried to disentangle himself from her. “Besides, now I'll have to go out to the market again and buy more food. There is not enough fish for us of all, as it is now.” He murmured aggravated.

She let go of her companion and looked around.

“Lets see, I'll help you with this and you wont have to go out again, ok. Lets make a meal worth of the shogun for them”, and she started busying herself around the kitchen. Heisuke inspected their meagre ingredients and doubted she could even satisfy a lesser ronin with them, much less a general.

Dinner that evening, was very lively. Shimpachi and Sanosuke were loud with their questions, most of them about the beauty of the Osaka Geishas and the quality of their sake, a point where Heiske joined in.

Okita had his share of laughs and retold the most hilarious of their misadventures in the far away city, while Hijikata sat stoically at Kondo-samas side. From time to time Sannan inquired about some of the more technical details and then even Saitou looked interested in the conversation. Chizuru had a great time listening in on the lively tales. Only her attempts at making eye contact with Hijikata seemed to not take any fruit.

Before the night got to old, Kondo-sama ended the little banquet and wished them all a good rest. Heisuke started to clear up the dishes. Surprisingly he got some help from Okita, who normally despised housework, but who seemed to have missed this camaraderie quite a lot on his journey with the demon commander.

The rest of the captains excused themselves and retreated for the night.

This was Chizurus best chance to have a word with the withdrawn second. She got up just after Kondo-sama left, made her way to the porch and waited in front of Hijikatas door, for him to come by. She casually sat down on the veranda, loosing herself in the beauty of the gardens at night.

It wasn't long, before a deep voice interrupted her thoughts.

“You are very persistent tonight, what is it you want

Chizuru?"

-Right to the matter,- she thought as she looked up to the man standing behind her. He could have slipped into his rooms and she wouldn't have noticed, or ignored her all together.

-But Toshizo is no coward- the young woman reminded herself. She tried to smile up to him, but her eyes were sad.

“There is something I'd like to talk about with you, Hijikata-kun”, was her answer.

He waited patiently for her to start speaking, but instead Chizuru looked to the door next to his, where the light was still on. She got up, made her way into the garden and went to the training area,

that was empty at night. Two steps behind her the tall man followed.

The young woman reached a set of stairs and made herself comfortable on them, her companion remained standing. Chizuru looked up, first at the man who changed her life so much, then further up at the sky.

“You remember...”, she started, not exactly knowing how to word the things she had to say. It had seemed a lot easier when she was practising this conversation in her head, alone in her rooms at night. “...the night of the first snow.” It was a statement and he did not respond. “How much do you remember of that night?” Her voice trembled when she finished her question.

Silence was the only thing to answer her at first. She knew she had to be patient, wait for him to order his thought and phrase his response. It seemed to her he would not say anything that night, but she was mistaken.

“I woke up my usual self, naked, tucked into my futon with blood smeared blankets.”

She considered his answer for some time, when she was about to replay, he continued.

“At first, I did not know what happened that night. Then I started remembering... the pain, the change... and finally ...Chizuru.” Hijikata whispered the last words. At that moment he seemed more interested in the ground than on his female interlocutor. The brunet bit her lips. She was nervous to no end. This was a conversation she never wanted to have in the first place. But the question reminded: “All?”

Before the vice commander answered verbally, she could read the pain the whole incident cause in him.

He could not forgive himself for his deeds and he knew exactly what he had done that night. Hijikata closed his eyes and lowered his head until only shadows covered his face. His white knuckled fists shook at his side as he responded hoarsely.

“All.” After that the proud warrior turned around and took some steps in the direction of the main quarters before her tears strained

words stopped him in mid stride.

“I'm pregnant.”

Hijikata Toshizo froze.

Somewhere in town a dog had started barking, the wind rustled between the green leaves, an owl cried in the distance. For two people the world had stopped moving.

Hijikata knew without the slightest doubt, that Chizuru, the sweet and innocent Chizuru, had not laid with any other men, neither before nor after him. He knew she would never joke on a matter as serious as the one at hand either, for she was way to good at heart.

Oh so slowly he turned to face her, trembling, his head lifting inch by inch to look her in the eyes.

Her tears glistened in the moonlight, those big brown pools she had as eyes were dark like the blackest night and her outstretched hand pulled him to her side like a sirens call. He closed the small distance between them without him even noticing and took her hand into his. She made him sit by her on the dojo stairs. Then, as irrefutable proof of her words, she guided his hand to her stomach and placed it on the small bump, not showing yet through, but steadily growing under her clothes.

A long time none said a word, because no words were needed. Toshizo understood, that she did not blame him, as much as he understood how scared she was, of what would happen now with her, with him and with the child. The rules were clear on the matter, the punishment was so too. None the less, she would love the child he had given her, as much as...

“Who knows about this...?” He trailed off, not knowing how to call their situation, nor wanting to go any further in his own thought.

She had found new courage, it seemed, now that the difficult conversation was over. Now she could take action, now she would find a solution.

“No one,” she told him resolutely. “At least not for the moment. It wont be to long thou and the secret will be done for.”

He took her answer in straight and was ready for the next one.

“And what were you planning to do?”

For this question she took her time. Finally she concluded her thoughts.

“I don't know. This was the most important and the most difficult part until now.” She smiled up at him. “Now... I think I will leave the group. That would be the best, for all, I fear. Perhaps...” she thought it up on the moment, “I could find Sen and ask her if her offer still stands. Of course things have changed somewhat now...”

Chizurus cheeks coloured slightly in embarrassment. She had not thought of any escape rout, she had no plan for her future, nothing to present the father of her child with, that would reassure him, that she was capable of living and rising their child on her own.

He smiled at her reassuringly. "It is a start. We do not need to find a way right this moment. Soon yes, but not right now. None the less, we should tell Isami..."

"No!" She interrupted him. "If Kondo-sama knows the whole truth, he will be forced to act upon it. I do not want to see that happen."

"But you can not leave the Shinsengumi without telling anyone." Her companion argued back.

She grabbed his hand tighter and sight. "That I know too." Chizuru got up from her place on the stairs and smiled at the man who had captured her heart. "We will find a solution for this problem. Come", she gestured. "It's getting late."

The first thing in the morning, before Hijikatas sense of honour could make him do something very, very stupid, Chizuru went to speak with their fearless leader, a plan, not the best, but at least a plan drawn up in her head. All those lessons with Sannan were paying up.

Thank all of you for your support and your lovely reviews!

Next chappy up soon^^

#### 4. Chapter 4

It has been a long time now, but I had some trouble finishing up this story. I did not wish to have another fanfiction open for the next I-don't-know-how-many years, therefore I decided to finish this one before posting anything else.

It has been written down, but still needs betta reading and further editing, since I'm not to happy with it jet.

Thank you all for your wonderful reviews, love you people.

It was early morning, not even the sun was up jet, that there was a knock on Kondo Isamis door. He had hoped to at least be able to sleep in a little bit, seeing as last nights dinner had gone way into the morning hours, but it seemed his faithful commander was back at work at headquarters and so he had to get up too. He wondered what it was Toshi was so preocupaied with this early in the morning, none the less he sat up in bed and answered the door.

"Come in," he said while not bothering to get up any further. To his great surprise it was not Hijikata Toshizo who entered his room.

Instead Chizuru closed the doors behind her and addressed her leader.

"Good morning Kondo-sama. I hope I did not wake you." She stated

with a sweet smile. It was obvious she did wake him and both knew. "I was wondering, if you could lend me some of your time, Kondo-sama. There is a ..." here she paused and her cheeks reddened. "...a matter of great importance that I wish to speak to you about."

Isami suppressed a yawn. "The sun is not even up yet, Chizuru..." he commented a bit distraught.

"I did not wish to intrude on your daily work, commander. And this conversation could get a bit longer." Chizuru clarified.

The man still sitting in the middle of his bed rubbed his eyes, stretched and arranged the blankets around him.

"Well then," he said. "I'm awake now and there are no urgent matters calling for my attention."

Kondo finished with a smile.

The young woman in front of him bowed deeply. "Thank you very much Kondo-sama", when she sat up again, she closed her eyes for a moment. This could not be more difficult than telling Hijikata, she assured herself.

When she opened them again, the leader of the Shinsengumi had no doubt left, that something transcendental was going to be revealed to him.

"I must ask you, Kondo-sama, to neither judge me nor to interrupt me, until the very end of my tale. Can you do that?" Chizuru needed some kind of safety net. Her leader only nodded, showing he would not disturb her explanation.

With a deep sigh the young woman offered him her secret. "I'm pregnant, Kondo-sama."

The man before her tensed up in seconds. His face froze into a mask, before he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. One hand came up and when he looked at her again, his lips were pressed to a fine line and his eyes demanded the explanation, he desperately needed to not break the promise he had just given.

She started her tale from the end, going back in time step by step. "I was only sure of it two weeks ago. Before that, I had suspicions, that I did not want to acknowledge and even before, a feeling, that my world had changed." This time it was her taking a deep breath.

"The events that led up to this..." she had not found the right word to describe her predicament either, "... date back to early winter last year. One night, after finishing my duties, I was on my way to bed. I heard,..." she paused to find the right description. "... noises, pain filled noises to be exact. I am no stranger to that sound, the one a human makes, when changing into a raset-su."

Kondo sighed deeply. Chizuru interjected: "Kondo-sama, you know there are a few of the Shinsengumi captains, that are raset-su. But I fear, that their number is higher than the official count."

The leader of the warrior troupe looked at her, as if she had accused his men of mutiny.

“Please Kondo-sama, do not judge them too hard.” Her interjection caught the man of guard. “They are soldiers, warriors with a worthy cause to fight for. Don't condemn them for wanting to fight for you, or for being desperate enough, to grasp the last possible solution, to stay at your side.”

Chizuru had tears in her eyes. Her comrades had tried to do the best for the group. She wanted their leader to understand that.

Isami Kondo let his right hand go through his hair a few times, then rest it in his lap with the other. This was neither the moment to inquire about the use his man gave the ochimizu, nor to discuss Chizuru's involvement in the case. He nodded once more and the woman at his side, restarted her tale.

“I just wanted to help, Kondo-sama. I went into the room, where the noise came from and found a rasetzu, one that was gone so far in his blood lust, I was not sure I could help any more. But I had trapped myself already, so I decided that the kamis would know my destiny. I offered him my blood, like I have done for many of my companions here until now. Drinking it calms them down, to the point where their senses return and the blood lust disappears under their normal self. This one did not take the offered sacrifice, instead it stilled another hunger with me, before he drank my blood. Afterwards, I made sure he would not freeze to death and returned to my room.”

Kondo had buried his face into his hands. One of his captains, one of his closest friends, had imposed himself upon a woman. He had broken a taboo, he had broken one of their golden rules. And it had not been any woman, but Chizuru, the flower, the princess they all cared for.

When he looked up, he could see the pain of that night in her eyes. The pain this all caused in her, the pain the future held for them all.

“For a long time I did not know, how much he remembered of that night.” She said with a sad face. “I did not want to know.” She added in a whisper.

“He knows.” More than a question, it was Kondos confirmation of what she had not said aloud. She nodded. “And he knows about the child.” This time she looked up at the commander and smiled beautifully. He did not need any more answers to that question either.

“I am willing to leave the group, on my own, commander. I'll take the responsibility for my child's life and I will not be a burden for the Shinsengumi.” Chizuru's smile had vanished and cold steel lay in her eyes. “But, under no circumstances, I will reveal the name of the father. He was not himself that night, he had no control over his actions and he has been punishing himself for them, ever since. There is no need for you, commander, to take action on this matter.”

In that moment Kondo Isami saw that the sweet child they had adopted was no longer there. She had grown into a woman, still with a heart of gold, but with a resolve, that would bent any sword and dent any

fangs which tried attacking her.

“That is your wish?”, Isami asked to make sure.

“That is my final word on this case,” she replied, head held high.

“Are you going to accept my word on your case?”

That was a good question. She had said she would leave eventually and take the responsibility. But would she accepted his judgement, his council?

This time Chizuru beamed at him, before she bowed. “You are my commander, Kondo-sama. I will follow your orders.”

The sun had risen mere moments ago, when a light knock on Kondo Isamis door announced the second visitor of this day. This time there was no mistake possible and so the leader of the ronin squat, let his second in command enter. Hijikata blinked once at seeing the young female in their leaders room, twice, and then his face closed up into the unreadable mask, he wore like an armour.

Chizuru on the other hand looked up from her position on the floor and greeted the demon commander with one of her usual bright smiles. “Good morning Hijikata-kun”, to which he replayed with a nod, fixing his eyes on his superior for an answer to this unusual constellation.

“It seems Toshi,” Kondo readily supplied. “That we have quit a problem at our hands. Someone took... his liberties with our dear Chizuru-chan and now, the Shinsengumi are expecting their first child.” He finished with a smile on his lips. That moment, if Hijikata Toshizo was a lesser man, he would have fainted.

## 5. Chapter 5

Thank you all for your reviews and all the favorites. here the next chapter^^

Breakfast that morning, Saitou had kitchen duty, started out as normal as any day. Perhaps a bit quieter due to the late hour dinner finished the night before. As even the last yawning member of the Shinsengumi had taken his seat and started to sleepily shove rice into their mouths, Kondo-sama cleared his throat. It wasn't often the man announced something at breakfast, mainly because it was a hassle getting and holding his men attention that early in the day, but when he did, everyone was on alert in seconds.

"Well," he started, and seemed not to know how to proceed any further. "There is something that has come to my attention and I think, all of you should at least be informed of it. The final decision lays obviously with Chizuru, who is the primer affected by it, but I would say that such an important situation, should not be taken carelessly, or without our council."

Here he looked at the young woman sitting at Hijikatas side, as if asking for permission. She nodded with a soft smile and the commander continued.

"Before you all get into an uproar, just let me finish. It is apparent, that someone took his liberties with our dear Chizu..."

As was predictable Kondo Isami was not able to finish the sentence before loud cries of indignation filled the room. Sannan blinked disturbed and did not seem to know what to do exactly, but the vain pulsing on his head and the white knuckles of his fists told everyone that he was beyond pissed. Simpachi, Sanosuke, Okita and Heisuke were standing in the middle of the room, faces red like ripe grapes and screaming hell to anybody listening. Saitou just sat there, looked at Chizuru and promised death through his eyes, to the person who had laid their hands on her. Hijikata had not moved a muscle since the three of them sat down to start their breakfast nearly 20 minutes before. Stone faced he looked at the raging room.

Kondo had his hand risen patiently, waiting for the first storm to pass. But his men had forgotten about their leader in their anger and slowly the commander was reaching his own limit. Chizuru had been prepared for indignation, for loud cries and for threats, but not for this mayhem. She saw how her commanding officer was struggling not to lose his cool, took a deep breath and screamed the loudest she could.

"Stoooooop!" Instantly all action ceased and all eyes were on her petite form. Somewhat out of breath she continued, quieter: "Would you all calm down. Kondo-sama has not finished yet. It would be prudent to hear him out, don't you think, before you start a war over something that can not be undone."

"But, but... Chizuru..." Heisuke started to protest. The young woman shook her head.

"Sit down, everyone," and she looked each of her friends in the eye. "And listen to the rest of the story."

Grumbling they did as they were told, and the leader of the Sinsengumi stared to speak again.

"Thank you Chizuru. Sometimes I think you know them better than I could ever try to understand."

He looked at his captains. "Now that you can listen to me again, I don't want any more interruptions, understood?"

No replies.

"It seems someone took his liberties with our dear Chizuru. And as a result, there is a small little blessing coming to us."

Everyone eyes opened wide, but no one dared comment.

"Chizuru, being her usual selfless her, has offered to leave the group as to not be a burden for us. I know your feelings, I share them for the most part, but I want you to be practical. Think of the troupe, of the community we are and then answer my question truthfully. What should we do with the mother and her child?"

Kondo looked at Sannan first.

The scientist and tactician was pale, weighting every argument he could come up and deciding.

Finally he said: "If she has already decided, I agree with her, that for the best of the troupe, she should leave. She will become a liability, more than she already is and the child will not only be our weakest point, it will cause chaos and unrest."

He closed his eyes, a sight on his lips. "None the less, this is not a decision I could make with my head. If you ask me, I would throw common sense over board and welcome the new member with open arms."

Next was Heisuke, who crossed his arms in front of his chest. "Do you even have to ask, Kondo-sama?! You know I have no practical sense. Of course I would have Chizuru here, it's much easier to protect her and the child if they stay close." He looked to the side with an angry huff, without anything more to say.

Okita took his turn now. He had closed his eyes, vain pulsing on his forehead and fists pulled into his lap. All humour or jesting gone from his face.

"It's not that easy. We have our rules, our code of honour. Technically it...", he stopped midway, and pulled at his hair.

"Oh Chizuru-chan, why do you always complicate things so much. All I want to do right now, is gut that pig who touched you and not decided if it's more practical for you to stay or to leave." He finished whispering. "I would never want you to leave", and let his head hang low.

Sanosuke Harada didn't look any more happy than the younger man who spoke before him.

"I know how much work children are." He glared at the two boys at his side, and received twin glares back. "But we have kept them safe ever since, we can do so now too."

It was obvious he did not wish for her to go either.

Shimpachi looked more sour than he could manage normally. "I agree with the last three", he said.

Saitou had grabbed his katana some time ago, his fingers white, holding on to the sheath. "Rules are rules. I'm not saying I wish for her to leave. But she is part of the group, she has to obey the rules we established. It is up to the commander if he wished to do an exception." His teeth clenched, he added under his breath: "I agree with Okita"

Chizuru who sat next to him looked at her companions with a fond smile on her lips. This was not her turn to speak, so she remained silent and waited out what the last of them had to say. Not that she had any doubts about Hijikata. The demon commander would take his role as the dark inquisitor in this case, he would be the advocate of their rules and demand that she leave the troupe to never return. She knew that it was his way of punishing himself for what he still viewed as a deplorable sin.

"There should be no room for discussion, Kondo. Chizuru is a member of the Shinsengumi, she has to follow its rules as much as the rest of us. They state it clearly, that in case of such a insubordination the penalty is death. I'm no demon, contrary to common believe. I would not ask a mother to commit suicide and leave her child behind, or take it with her. But I must insist, that she has to leave the troupe and never contact us again. She will, for all purpose, be dead to us."

No emotion crossed his stony face, no trembling in his voice could betray how much he regretted his words. He was the first who wanted Chizuru to stay, but it was not his place to say so, neither as second in command, nor as the father of that unborn child.

Kondo Isami cleared his thought again.

"Now that all of us have had their say, I'd like to clarify, that I will not turn my back on our only female member. But it is not my decision." Then he looked at the young woman. "It is yours. And after hearing them all, do you still wish to leave Chizuru? Or will you allow us to protect the two of you? To rise this child, as if it was our own?"

Kondo-sama had a way with words, silently worming into ones heart and soothing with a soft smile. He always got what he wanted, even thou the things he wanted were few and far between.

With tears in her eyes and trembling from her contained sobs, the brunet looked at everyone of her companions before she answered.

"If you wish to have me by your side, I'll gladly stay with all of you." A watery smile shining on her beautiful face.

The occupants of the room rejoiced loudly, their faces splitting into happy grins. Even the ones who mentioned the rules, where smiling contently. Only Hijikata was still emotionless staring at nothing in particular. The tense hold of his shoulders had lessen and the cold glint in his eyes has been replaces with a serenity that spoke of his satisfaction with the outcome of their discussion. Chizuru was very happy to know, that he too, would welcome her back.

Okita interrupted their celebration, his grin still present, but the underlying anger in his voice and eyes was palpable. "Now that Chizuru stays with us, we should find that bastard and show him how the Shinsengumi treat their enemy..." murder could be heard in his words. Most of the present males agreed. They were quick to draw their swords, and their tempers were rising again.

This time it was Kondo himself who stopped the upcoming storm.

"About that matter..." his loud voice let the group of ronin stop in their tracks. "I must confess, that I don't see eye to eye with Chizuru on it. But she does not wish to take repercussions on the father of her child." Loud indignation was the answer to this statement.

"I do not know who that person is, it is probably the best if I do not." He concluded and all eyes fell on the mother.

Chizuru felt uncomfortable. How could she tell them not to avenge her and not tell them who the father was.

"Chizuru-chan... that man should not go around harming more people, don't you think?" Okita knew how to press her bottoms.

"That is right, Chizuru-chan!" Heisuke agreed. "And he should pay for what he did to you, do you not agree?"

The brunet had a hard time struggling with words. Her cheeks were aflame and she was biting her lips into a messy plump.

"If things had been different, I would agree with you, boys. But that night, neither of us had any control of the things that happened."

She could hear the men huff in protest and she got angry. "Don't!" Her eyes sparkled with a fury they had seldom seen. "Do I have to remind you, that you know exactly what it is to have no control over oneself?"

The Shinsengumi captains looked embarrassed everywhere but at Chizuru. A quiet murmur started up again.

"No. The situation may have not been the same." She countered. "But neither of us had any control over the things that happened that night. I can assure you, that the father of this child will not hurt anyone else in this form again."

The silence was thick between the warriors. "Please, just let the matter drop for my sake."

She looked at Okita and Heisuke with her big pleading eyes. It would have been a lost cause, even for the stoic Saitou, to try and fight her that moment. They sat down again and tried to quench their murderous intent.

"Thank you", she surprised everyone. With a big smile Chizuru added: "You will all be fathers to this little one and my child will be the luckiest, for having such a big, wonderful family."

Kondo-sama applauded her decision, loosening the tension that had filled the room up until then.

"Well said, Chizuru-chan. From now on, we will all look out for you and the small bundle of joy."

"Ne Chizuru?" Heisuke interjected. "I don't know if I would be such a good father. Do you think I could be a big brother instead?" The boy asked somewhat embarrassed. Everyone started laughing, the breakfast had long been forgotten.

## 6. Chapter 6

Spring had shown its most beautiful side, the Sakura blossoms covered the streets and gardens in their last dance before summer. A warm south wind filled the air with the exotic smell of flowers and the lively song of the birds. The day to day activities of the Shinsengumi increased, more fights had started, new intrigues were

forged and old enemies had returned to town. Still each captain had continued instructing Chizuru in the art of the sword until her growing belly had been more a hindrance than even she would take into account. They had protested at first, but the young woman insisted that her training was more important than ever before, to protect the unborn child. She had won them over fairly easily, but had given in, once she was not able to hold up with the physical lessons any more. Her theoretical lessons with Sannan did not stop thou.

They were sitting in a room overlooking the garden, brooding over an old text, Chizuru deep in thoughts about the tactical value of the notes, when Okita knocked and entered without invitation. A happy grin on his face and a tray with strawberry in one hand, he opened the shoji doors into the garden and sat down facing the greenery.

"Ne Sannan-san, don't monopolise our little hime. She has been looking at your dusty books for the last two weeks. Give her a break and let's all enjoy the wonderful weather."

"Don't you have anything else to do, Okita?" The bespectacled Shinsengumi asked with a sight.

"This is quit the complicate text we are working at, and you are intruding."

To their surprise Chizuru stepped in: "Besides it was me who insisted on going through it, not Sannan-san." Smiling she looked up at the young warrior. "But you are right, Okita-chan. I have been reading for some hours now, my thoughts are starting to mix together. And the weather is way to good to stay inside the whole day!"

She stood up, rearranging the folds of her kimono she had started wearing again, since she did not train actively any more, and made her way to the veranda. Her instructor followed, a pillow in hand for their princess to sit on. "Indeed, we have been studying the whole morning. Chizuru-chan has been very adamant about gathering knowledge in the past weeks." He said sitting down and taking a piece of fruit for himself.

"I have nothing else to do now!" The brunet protested, munching on her own red delicacy and grabbing a second one already. "You boys don't let me do anything any more. Kondo-sama even prohibited me from doing any housework. And you have been fussing all over me, as if I had turned into glass." Chizurus frustration was apparent now. A third one of the fruits found it's way into her mouth. Okita started laughing, while Sannan grinned amused behind his own snack.

"Ne Okita, that is not funny at all!" The soon to be mother scolded him. "I feel so useless sometimes."

The warriors had learned to identify her mood swings by now and the young swordsman tried to calm his friend. "We only want the best for you, Chizuru-chan. It can not be easy to do all the things carrying such a weight in front of you. And I'm not saying you are fat," Okita reassured her. "That child of yours is just very big and strong." He grinned victoriously as she sight.

"Besides", Sannan added. "We like to take care of Chizuru. It makes all of us feel more... fatherly... towards the little one. And the

weather is not helping either, didn't you say yesterday, that it was to warm to even get up some of the mornings?"

Chizuru sight gain, closed her eyes and enjoyed the peaceful feeling that mid May day was presenting them with.

Ever since Chizuru was officially too heavy with child to carry on her daily routine, all members of the Shinsengumi looked out for her. Shimpachi and Sanosuke proclaimed themselves her official bodyguards and accompanied her to the market, the shrine or the medic, carrying any purchases she made for her.

On the other Hand, Heisuke had taken over any and every of her tasks at the Shinsengumi household. Cooking, washing and cleaning, whenever her turn, the young warrior jumped in with renewed energy and hushed her away, because Chizuru tried her hardest to at least be useful somewhere.

Saitou and Okita decided to entertain her, whenever she was not in her lessons with Sannan. If their flower had her head and heart on funny things, it was less probable she decided to take whatever matter she thought incomplete into her own hands. The captains had quickly learned, how many things the young woman managed for their house on a daily basis and that, if they wanted to keep her from worrying, they had to full fill every task to her standards, or pretend they did and keep her occupied otherwise.

The two swordsmen took turns going out on walks with Chizuru, reading or playing any games they thought suitable with her. Soon she had learned the rules for Shogi and Go, of which she preferred the first one, and some of the cruder dice and card games that Okita was fond of.

The one who catered to any and all of the young mothers wishes was, surprisingly for all, Hijikata.

From the first day they had decided that Chizuru would stay with them, the demon commander had started looking out for her desires. He was the first to greet her in the mornings, he accompanied her to every meal, when his duties allowed it, and he was the one to see her off to bed at night. If he could not be present, he appointed one of the other captains to replace him.

Chizuru had been delighted to see how much her favourite captain cared for her. She enjoyed every moment of his company, sometimes even stalling to have just that little bit more time with him alone. He did not seem to mind at all.

One night, the two of them were sitting on the porch before her door, she decided to see how far he would go.

"If I asked you, " Chizuru made sure to look the vice commander in the eye. "to bring me the head of the shogun, would you do so?"

The man at her side stared at her for a long while. His hands clenched on the hilt of his katana before he answered in all honesty.

"If that is your wish?"

"No!" Chizuru grabbed his free hand with her own two and hold them tight. "I would never wish for you to get hurt because of me in any way. Why you would indulge in such stupid wishes, I do not know." She exclaimed, quieter she added: "But I'm very happy, none the less."

His tense shoulders relaxed again and she rested her head on his arm for a while, before retiring that night.

The rest of the captains supposed it was their seconds silent, but heard felt apology to their hime, for his hurtful words the day of the announcement. Nobody even imagined the real reason behind the demon commanders tame behaviour.

The peace of June had slowly turned into unrest throughout the following month. Even thou the men tried to keep Chizuru uninformed, more and more rumours of an upcoming battle made their way into the Shinsengumi headquarters. Small riots that broke out, fights that got to the very portal of the building and the disquiet of the soldiers told the young woman, that something was very wrong.

Ok so the next chapter is hear.

Thank you for following this Story, I hope you'll like it till the end^^

## 7. Chapter 7

Kondo-sama had been called to the shogun and was away from headquarters with a dozen of the soldiers. The half full moon stood high in the night sky, as the sound of metal clashing and the cries of the attacking warriors woke Chizuru of a restless sleep. She wrapped herself in a kimono, grabbed her sword and made her way out. Careful to stay hidden in the shadows, the female Shinsengumi followed the sounds of battle into the country yard of their home. There, half a dozen unknown men were attacking the soldiers. More were coming through the portal. Not stopping, the pregnant woman crept along the walls.

She passed Sannan, whose white hair reflected the moonlight, fighting two intruders near the dojo entrance. On the other side of the yard she could see Sanosuke wilding his spear against three others. Her second bodyguard had made his way to the portal and was trying to close the entranceway. Okita was fighting of the incoming enemies with Saitou covering his back.

On her way around the houses, Chizuru found Heisuke, red enraged eyes and white hair, battling a tall warrior, whom they had met before. She remembered him being one of Kazamas men and Heisukes declared rival.

Why she had rounded the buildings and run into harms way, Chizuru did not know. The only thing the brunet was sure of was, that she had to be there. Something, or someone was calling out to her and she had to reach them before it was too late. Silently she passed the two fighters, ignoring the groaning of sword against sword, and continued her way.

She had nearly returned to the point she had started from, when she

saw two shadows in the gardens. As she approached, she could make out long black hair dancing in the wind, two swords gleaming in the moonlight. In front of Hijikata stood none other than Chikage.

"You will not go any further, Kazama." The demon commander warned the Oni.

"And why is that? I'm here to retrieve my future wife." Chikage taunted his opponent. "She has been your hostage long enough."

Hijikata attacked first. Katanas clashed fast and strong against each other. A dance under the moonlight had started, wherein the second of the Shinsengumi seemed to have the upper hand. Step by step he drew his opponent out of the garden, through the small yard with the well until he could see Heisuke engaged in his own battle. Chizuru followed them silently in the shadows.

"My, you are a fierce one tonight, Hijikata." With this words Kazama's eyes changed colour, his hair turned white and four little horns appeared on his forehead. "Let's see if you can stand your ground if I go all out on you."

And the dance started again, faster, stronger than before. None of them wanted to relent. The Shinsengumi was the first one to taste the bite of his opponents sword, but Hijikata kept standing and fighting. Kazama had to take a step back, as the humans sword graced his arm and drew blood.

Enraged he countered harder and they returned into the garden, out of the yard.

The quiet spectator followed once more, she found them locked in a raging battle of wills, swords crossed and bodies pressing against each other. The demon commander was losing terrain, but holding up as good a stance as humanly possible, while Kazama tried hard not to show how frustrated he was, for not being able to defeat a simple human. The oni disappeared from in front his opponent and reappeared behind him, slashing at his back in an attempt to win the fight. Hijikata dodged the attack, but fell to the ground landing on his wounded side. Chizuru's breath caught in her throat and a silent, strangled cry escaped her alerting the prone human of her presence.

The man stood up with renewed purpose, he had to get his enemy out of Chizuru's reach as soon as possible. But Kazama had other plans.

The oni had grown tired of the sword play and with one swift movement, combining his magical speed, agility and force, impaled his katana in the demon commanders body. His opponent fell to his knees, despairingly holding at his chest and coughing blood. Satisfied, Kazama drew his sword back, freed it of blood and sheathed it. A helpless cry pierced the night and Chizuru ran out of the shadows that had been protecting her all along. Blinded to all but the wounded man on the floor, she stumbled and fell from the veranda, landing in the outstretched arms of her would be kidnapper. Taken by surprise because of Chizuru's increase in weight, Chikage lost his balance. He was mindful enough to cushion the young woman's fall.

"What the h...?"

The brunet had scrambled out of his arms and was holding the lifeless body of his fallen enemy before Kazama could even finish his question. Big tears were rolling down Chizurus cheeks while she was holding the nearly unconscious warrior to her chest, murmuring incoherently.

"Why...let out... rasetsu...don't leave... don't..."

The blond oni had to look twice to comprehend the scene in front of him. Chizuru, heavy with child, sitting in the bloodstained dust with her kimono hanging open, clinging despairingly to the fading man at her side and nearing hysterics. Of all the outcomes he had envisioned for this night, this one, had never occurred to him.

"Shit!" cussing loudly he made his way to the broken woman. Kneeling at her side he tried to part her away from the demon commander. She screamed again, her wailing intensifying. Not knowing what to do exactly, Chikage tried to calm her.

"Let go of him, Chizuru. Shhhhhh... He will be all right, I'll bring him back for you... Shhhhhh, please calm down and let go."

Completely out of his element Kazama talked to the crying woman in soothing tones and even dislodged her hands from the fallen Shinsengumi warrior before quick footsteps coming from the yard alerted him to another's presence.

Rasetsu and oni alike stopped at the entrance to the gardens in bewilderment, made up their mind and run to the three figures on the ground. Heisuke warping his arms around Chizuru could not hold back his accusations.

"What the shit were you thinking?! How could you have let her see..."

His red headed opponent had faced the oni prince too.

"What is going on here, Kazama?" bewildered he looked on as his superior lowered the injured human to the ground and started to draw his own sword. Chizuru did not take to well to that motion and her screams intensified calling more spectators onto the place.

"Do something useful boy and get her inside. If I had known the two of them mated already I would have renounced my claim..."

Kazama Chikage slit his wrist against the sharp blade and lowered it to the perishing man's lips, purring ringlets of blood into his mouth.

"Stop talking crap, you creep!"

"I fear we should stop arguing among ourselves," Sannans calm voice bought them back to reality. "Chizuru-chan needs our help right now."

Okita and Saitou, who had just arrived followed his line of view. Their hime-chan had gone into hysterics, crying uncontrollably and clutching at her belly in a pained gesture.

"We should take her inside and lay her down on a futon." The bespectacled captain took command. Okita helped Heisuke lifting the pregnant woman up, together they carried her the few steps up to the house and into her nearby room.

"The shock was too much for her, she seems to have gone into labour." They heard Sannan instructing the remaining men. "Saitou, I need you to get Dr. Matsumoto. I may know a bit about medicine, but definitively not enough to bring a child into this world."

Saitou departed with a quiet spoken "Hai."

"You, I would appreciate it if you could tell those idiots in the front yard to stop brawling." Sannan addressed the red haired man completely seriously. The oni understood that something more important than their petty quarrels was taking place and stood up. "Tell them to fetch clean sheets from the storage house and boil some water. Chizuru is giving birth tonight."

Okita and Heisuke had put their friend to bed, freeing her of the obi and the outer layers of her kimono and making sure she was kept warm. Heisuke stayed at her side, holding and soothing her all the while. Okita returned to the gardens. He found Kazama and Sannan trying to revive Hijikata and speaking in hushed tones.

"He has lost too much blood. I do not know if this will be enough", the oni said, while still trying to feed the vice commander his blood.

"I am wondering why he has not transformed as of yet", commented the scientist, holding his comrade up.

"It crossed my mind. But he really seemed adamant on staying human. It may be because of our dear Oni girl?" Chikage wondered aloud. "We should move him too, before the screaming oafs get here with the supplies." Kazama concluded and picked his enemy up, lifting him into his arms. "Lead the way."

Sannan made his way to the porch and passed Okita, followed by the oni. They entered the room next to Chizuru's. The young warrior could hear the rustling of clothes before the door was closed.

At that moment the running footsteps of his comrades got him back from that surreal scene.

Sanosuke was carrying a stack of blankets and Shimpachi had a smoking basin in his hands.

"Is it true, Okita?", asked the first.

"Is our Chizuru really giving birth tonight?", asked the second stopping in front of the young captain.

"I think so..." Okita still had problems grasping the concept himself, but he let them into the young woman's room, following and sitting near the door.

The last chapter will be up shortly, hope you enjoyed this one^^

## 8. Chapter 8

"So, what you are trying to tell me, is that my second in command forced himself on the girl he has been waiting on day and night for the last...four months?" incredulous Kondo looked the blond in the eye.

Nonplussed Kazama answered. "Basically yes."

He took a sip from his pipe and sight. "Of course it is way more complicated than that."

"From what I gathered from Chizurus tale, we can assume that Hijikata was stubborn enough to neglected 'feeding' his blood lust for quite some time. As I'm sure you know, something stupid like that, can have very nasty side effects. If we add Yukimuras own emotion into the equation..."

"What does that change?", Kondo interrupted irritated. "Don't tell me she bought it upon herself, or similar nonsense."

"You are forgetting that Yukimura is Oni, human." Kazama corrected. "No, she did not bring it upon herself. It may have helped the situation along, but it was no way her fault. Neither was it your commanders for that matter, besides his carelessness."

The blond oni purred them both some more sake and took a gulp of it.

"Chizuru has been harbouring a deep fondness for that man ever since I first set eyes on her. That is why I wanted to distance her from your group in the first place. To be honest, it has been very amusing watching the two of them dancing around each other for the last 18 moons or so. At first, he may have reacted to me out of pride, but sooner than later your demon commander got himself trapped into something that grew way over his head."

Chikage refilled his cup.

"Because she was not raised as an oni, it was very obvious for any of us watching. And those intense feelings your humans take so much pride in, and we onis condemn, are like beacons of light."

As Hijikata changed into his rasetsu, loosing all control because of his overwhelming blood lust, the rudimentary oni instincts must have taken over. He may have understood on some level what was going on, but like the overpowering blood lust, he had no say in the happenings. For all instance and purpose he mated, or married, Yukimura that night."

The oni prince sight and looked at Kondo again. Defending his declared rival was not sitting well with him.

"I don't think it would be prudent to deal with him, at least not in your normal fashion."

Kondo Isami had closed his eyes and contemplated the past happenings and the future actions to be taken. It had been shocking to discover,

at his return from the shogun, that Chizuru had gone into labour while headquarters had been under attack. More disconcerting than had been the news that his best friend had been the one, to father Chizuru's child. What could he do, to maintain the order of his troops without harming the young woman they cared so much about or his childhood friend for that matter.

"Speaking of Toshi, how is he doing?" He asked, his heart heavy. Hijikata Toshizo had not woken once since the battle three days ago. Chizuru had opened her eyes the next morning, confused and exhausted, but fine none the less. Her happiness over her newborn daughter was only shadowed by her concern for the unconscious man laying in the room next door.

"It is up to him now. With the transfusion Sannan made from my blood, he should be able to heal his wounds without problems." Chikage blew more smoke from his lips. "He seems to be fighting himself, or more precisely his rasetu side. Perhaps he has been for a while now, without anyone noticing."

The prince reclined more against the armrest, eyes half closed, enjoying the beauty of the summer garden.

"I hope he realises in time, that he is more oni than rasetu now. Not even my blood could save him if he keeps self destroying." A big, predatory grin spread on Kazamas face. "If he survives, he will be one of a kind. And he will wake to a whole new life." He twirled his pipe ideally. "I suppose he will be my responsibility, as he is part of my blood now, part of my clan... What to do?"

A malicious, impish smile played on the onis face as he watch out for the humans reaction. Isami had closed up, his face a mask of stone resembling the one Toshi wore on occasions. Not wanting to push the commander of the Shinsengumi to far, Chikage relented.

"I think I'll leave him to you for the moment. Chizuru will not take it kindly if I whisk away her mate any time soon and I myself have some preparations to make on this matter, too." The blond refilled their sake cups.

"Be prepared for quite a ride, human" He toasted to Kondo and throw the alcohol back. "Young Oni tend to be... wild." Kazamas laughter filled the room.

The leader of the ronin troop only asked himself, to whom his interlocutor was referring to, the small child that was peacefully sleeping at her mothers side, or the man he would always call brother.

Chizuru rearranged her Kimono and sat in a more comfortable position on the cushions at the side of the futon. Her little girl was peacefully sleeping in a bundle of white line cloth at her left, her mate laying in the bed on her right side. With a small smile on her face she draped the washing cloth in the basin with cold water, wrung it and placed it on Hijikatas forehead. With worried fingers she traced his face and tucked a strand of black hair behind one ear.

"Please come back to me," Chizuru whispered into the quite room. "Wake up Hijikata-san."

With a deep sigh she sat back and watched the unconscious man for some time. A new idea came to her and careful not to wake the newborn, the young woman took her child from its bedding and lay it on its father's chest. She lowered herself until she was mere inches away from the demon commander.

"Don't you want to see your beautiful daughter, Hijikata-san? She has your stunning eyes, and Okita swears, your nose too. She will be an able warrior when she grows. Will you deny her a father's teachings?" Chizuru tried to be as persuasive as she could. They weren't even sure Hijikata could hear them, but Matsumoto-sensei had told them to talk to the unconscious man, even Kazama had agreed on the likelihood that something so seemingly pointless would speed up his recovery.

She places one hand on her child's back and rested her head on her other elbow. Closing her eyes she listened to the summer wind playing with the window chimes, the crickets singing in the garden, the water of the small pond rippling whenever a fish broke the surface and the distant voices of the day to day life of headquarters. So many things had changed in such a short time...

"It's so strange having Kazama around without fighting him," she mused. "Even his two companions have stayed behind and are getting along quite well with the others. The occasional turmoil notwithstanding. But what would you expect when you pack a bunch of human wolfs with three proud Oni into one house?"

Opening her eyes again she started playing with Hijikata's hair.

"You know, Kazama has been really agreeable this last three days. I think I scared him for the rest of his life." Chizuru's monologue was interrupted by her own giggles. "I fear the Kazama clan will have some severe difficulties getting a heir any time soon. But to his defence, he kept his cool very well. That stuck up Oni even explained things to me, you see."

"It's embarrassing..." the young mother fished for words. "How am I to tell you this without stepping too close. It took me months to muster up the courage to tell you about the pregnancy..."

A deep sigh escaped her lips. "If I understood everything correctly, all of this mess was because I was raised as a human and have no idea of Oni customs...because, Oni repress their feelings, it seems, as else they would mix up very badly with their instinctual magic side." A deep frown graced her forehead. "Well, with the white haired and horned beast they change into when in their true form. So, to keep a clear mind they repress their feelings, the opposite of humans, who draw strength from them.

Kazama said, that rasetzu have some Oni in them, a very small part that acts mostly unconsciously.

All this is more confusing than I thought possible."

She let herself roll onto her back and stared at the ceiling, time passing her by without any reaction from her audience. "When... when two Oni really like each other, something this day is very rare, and they meet on a certain time, then their true forms will take over and

act on instinct. That is how oni mating was done in the past said Kazama. I... I will not deny that I harbour some affection for you, Hijikata-san. And..." Chizurus cheeks heated up." And.. your Oni side at least, has some very strong feelings for me, and when you changed into a rasetsu because you ignored the blood lust for to long, it took over. It seemed to be the right time for mating, and as we... liked each other enough, well... those things happened."

Out of breath and embarrassed out of her mind the brunette stopped. Taking deep breaths she sat up.

It was nearly noon and lunch would be served very soon. She had promised the captains she would eat with them that day, bringing along their charge to be ogled and cooed upon some more. It surprised her even now how well they all took the news of Hijikatas parenting. But she suspected Souji and Heisuke would give him hell when he woke up again, not to mention Shimpachi and Harada. Saito had frowned deeply for a day and then decided Hijikata was not the worst person to father their collective daughter. Sannan was way to occupied with the medical aspects of the commanders treatment and the peculiarities of an Oni birth to focus on anything else. Besides Hijikata had become his favourite research project.

Taking her daughter into her arms, Chizuru bent down to the demon commander.

"Please wake up soon, my mate," blushing deeply she placed a chaste kiss on his cheek. "Don't fight the Oni inside you." Afterwards she made her way to the common room for the meal.

It was some days later deep purple eyes opened to the world, overloading his new keen senses with the chaotic and over active bustle of the Shinsengumi headquarters. Strange times were coming, with an Oni commander of the Miburoshi, a hime residing in the ronin household, a new alliance with the Oni clan of the west and a bundle of joy crying her way into ever changing history.

Ya ttttaaaaaaaaa! Finished! The End. Whatever you wish to call it ^^.

Sorry for the long wait. Life got in the middle of me and writing, and in the end, it took longer than I thought to completly edit this.

My next big, but unfortunately OnHold4UntoldTime, Hakuouki project is called Yukimura-Hime. Let me rewrite history for you, forge new alliances, make unlikely friends, start a family and who knows, perhaps get a happy ending.

If you liked 'Taking care' and are DBZ fans, please look into my first story in that fandom: "Infinity" (comming (hopefully) soon)

P.S.: If anyone has a better titel for this story, please please suggest it. It's still bugging me that I could not come up with anything better.

End  
file.